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ABSTRACT

Physical violence, a factor often associated with drug addiction, must be reduced or eliminated in order for drug dependent individuals to reenter society. To examine the extent to which individual violence associated with drug addiction was controllable by the Odyssey House drug addiction rehabilitation program, the violence potential of 47 residents was investigated through direct observation of the subjects' behaviors for a 6-month period. Results revealed that overt violence was well controlled within the facility, due in part to: (1) strong and unambiguous norms and sanctions; (2) opportunities to acquire self-esteem; (3) non-violent role models; (4) a procedure that enabled wrongs to be righted and conflicts to be resolved; and (5) a social learning process to extinguish violent behavior. The findings suggest that the Odyssey House program has been remarkably successful. (RC)

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WHEN PROHIBITION WORKS:

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE IN THE ODYSSEY HOUSE YOUTH PROGRAM AND IN THE FAMILY *

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Odyssey House, with 19 centers and facilities operating in six states, is one of the leading drug addiction rehabilitation programs. It aims to facilitate a person's "odyssey" from drug dependence to active societal participant by treating both the motivations for the addiction and the behavior associated with drug dependence.

One factor often associated with drug addiction is physical violence.*1 To re-enter society, physical violence must be reduced or eliminated and replaced with more appropriate forms of behavior. Odyssey House claims to be able to control individual violence. This aspect of the Odyssey House Program has been relatively unnoticed. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which this claim is valid, to identify the methods used to achieve non-violence, and to provide a theoretical understanding of this aspect of the Odyssey House program. Gelles and Straus (1979) list 15 theories purporting to explain violent behavior. Odyssey House seems to embody a number of these approaches in its treatment program. Since these are widely applicable theories, they suggest the possibility that the Odyssey House approach may have applicability for reducing violence in other similar settings; for example, for dealing with the widespread problem of violence within the family (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980).

METHOD

Residents are referred to the Odyssey House facilities which we studied in Hampton, New Hampshire by social agencies, parents, courts, and probation officers.*2 New adolescent residents enter a 12 week program in groups. At any given time groups at different stages in treatment are present in the house. They are supervised by adult residents who have passed through an initial adult program at the Hampton facility or one of the other Odyssey facilities. The Odyssey facility in Hampton could be viewed as a natural laboratory in the sense that the environment, personal contacts, what one does and does not do, are effectively controlled within the therapeutic milieu. Outside exposure is limited and the course a resident follows once in the facility is well laid out in advance.

To assess the effect of the Odyssey House milieu on the propensity to use physical violence, an institutional cycle design (Campbell and Stanley, 1963) was employed since no control gro p could be formed due to the nature of the facility. This design combines the longitudinal and cross sectional methods to compensate for their absence of a control. Data on how the Odyssey House program works, to bring about change was obtained by direct observation of the day to day operation of the program, beginning in February, 1976. The observation periods were conducted one to three days per week for a six month period. The hours and days were rotated each week so the observer could be present during mornings, afternoons and evenings of different days of every week in order that all portions of the treatment program were observed.

In addition, in April, 1976 all residents (N=47) were administered the Hand Test (Bricklin, et.al., 1962), a measure of violence potential. Further testing took place as adolescents entered or graduated from their 12 week program (two full groups graduated during the observation period). In August, 1976, all residents were retested. Questionnaires were also

used to obtain background and demographic data on each resident and to assess the impact of the role models provided by the Odyssey House program.

THE ODYSSEY HOUSE PROGRAM AND VIOLENCE

Entering the therapeutic milieu of Odyssey House is similar to entering a very different culture. Almost immediately, the new resident is taught the Odyssey House "way" of living and working with other people. The inviolables of the program, the cardinal rules (no sex, no violence, no drugs, no stealing, no knowledge of), are impressed upon the new resident at the onset or "Welcome in" phase of the program.

The Odyssey House "way" is considerably different from the former world of the new resident. A great number of the residents have been involved in behaviors that are clearly opposed to the cardinal rules. Fifty five percent had at least two court appearances, including one 17 year old with at least 50 hearings before a judge. Ten percent of the population had been charged with either armed robbery, carrying a concealed deadly weapon, or assault. There were arrests for arson, rape, and attempted murder. One-third of the residents had committed acts considered serious enough to be remanded to an adult or juvenile prison or detention center. Lastly, 48 percent had received psychiatric care for behavior and/or drug related problems, and 66 percent had been discharged from school for fighting or rule breaking behavior.

From this data, it can be assumed that adherence to the cardinal rules is difficult at best for the new resident. During the observation period there were in fact over 15 discharges for violation of cardinal rules. However, the fact that only one of these individuals was discharged for committing an act of violence (a girl who hit another resident), speaks for the effectiveness of Odyssey House in respect to violence. How is this accomplished?

NORMS AND SANCTIONS

Social rules or norms, and sanctions for violating these norms, are important mechanisms for controlling and directing behavior. But as our national experience with prohibition indicates, rules by themselves are not enough. This can also be observed in Odyssey House. Breaching any of the five cardinal rules leads to the strongest sanction in the program -- expulsion. Expulsion could mean a return to court for probation violation and incarceration. Despite this sanction there were many violations and expulsions for four of the five cardinal rules. This raises the question of why violence is better controlled in Odyssey House than the other four cardinal rules? In fact, there are a number of mechanisms that contribute. This paper will consider three of these: the provision of appropriate role models, building a sense of self-esteem, and procedures for resolving conflicts and grievances.

ROLE MODELS

The ex-addict and resident staff members serve a unique function in the Odyssey House system.[3] Not long before, they were in the same shoes now occupied by the new resident. As a reward for appropriate behavior (including non-violent behavior and attitudes) they have been given increasing status and responsibilities, first within their own treatment group, and then for new groups and within the facility in general. They live with and participate in the day to day activities of the residents. Having come through the program themselves, they are living demonstrations of its effectiveness. They are bridges between the behavior and values of the residents and the behavior and values of the helping professions.

In terms of social learning theory, both on-site observation and the questionnaire data show that they are role models. In response to the questionnaire, over 70 percent of the adolescents felt that, as compared to their peers, the ex-addict and resident staff: (1) impressed them the most when they entered the program, (2) were the friendliest and most liked, (3) were the most helpful in guiding them through the program, and (4) were the people the residents would most like to emulate. These data, are almost the opposite of what one would find in a typical juvenile institution, where peers are esteemed and the staff distrusted or despised.

Just as part of the explanation for violence is to be found in what is learned from role models within one's immediate environment (Bandura, 1973), role models demonstrating non-violent methods of interaction are needed to learn non-violent modes of interaction. The ex-addict staff and resident staff, because of the kind of people they are, and because of the nature of the Odyssey program, can provide these non-violent behavior models. It is the first of several conditions prevailing in Odyssey House which makes the prohibition of violence work.

SELF ESTEEM

Kaplan (1972) has argued that negative self attitudes can result in violence since, in some circumstances, violence INCREASES self-esteem. For example, if a social system or an individual is seen as the cause of one's problems, a successful violent attack on that system or person can give one a sense of power and therefore increase self-esteem. Violence can also build self-esteem by gaining recognition from peers as a tough guy, as someone who is daring and not to be fooled with. Hence, a program for controlling violence should provide alternative ways of instilling positive self-attitudes. We have identified three ways that Odyssey House does this:

SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCES

The Odyssey program is designed to make it possible for residents to pass through several treatment phases, each of which is a successful completion of a highly valued performance. Each level or phase in turn increases its demands and gives increased privileges such as more family visits, passes out of the facility, better room location, more freedom in personal possessions owned, and more individual freedom in the facility. Successful performance also brings increased responsibility, which is also a sign of status. As individuals reach responsibility levels involving

supervision of others, they are accorded colleague status by upper level residents, many of whom the residents have emulated earlier in the program. In addition, there are opportunities for other highly valued performances, including talks to high school students about the program and constructing or renovating facilities. Members of the group that opened the Dover facility took great pride in the fact that they had totally planned and renovated the facility. One ex-addict staff member talked with pride about being asked by the state governor to say a few words on his behalf to a state wide meeting of a social action group.

The residents observed during the six months of field work typically entered the program withdrawn or aloof. As they moved higher in the treatment program and approached colleague status with the staff, their demeanor and communication with the staff and the observer changed to that of interest, involvement, and helpfulness. Such data illustrate that access to and completion of highly valued performances leads to increasing self-esteem. In sum, Odyssey House is structured or organized to allow residents to succeed, therefore reducing a need to use violence as a method of demonstrating competence to one's self and others.

POSITIVE ATTITUDES OF OTHERS

Along with Kaplan (1972:595) we believe that the "attitudes of other people toward the subject influence the subject's self attitudes.... The degree to which the attitudes of others influence self evaluation appears to be a function of such factors as the discrepancy between self and other evaluations, the communication of other's evaluations to the subject and the importance of the other people to the subject."

This also seems to be an assumption of the Odyssey House program. Odyssey House document A (1976) holds that the "...design is based on the belief that troubled youngsters are most in need of being accepted into a positive group including strong adult role models, feeling better about oneself through overcoming both small and large obstacles, and recognizing that in the last analysis it is they themselves who decide what their life situation will be."

As a resident enters Odyssey House he or she is placed in a newly established treatment group. They will eat, work, play and, in general, be treated psychiatrically together. The treatment group contains 4-8 members, level 3 and level 4 staff assistants, and a treatment group leader who can be either an ex-addict or professional staff member.

Such groups are intended to take on the characteristics of families (Densen-Gerber 1973:121). Members are encouraged to "stretch out for one's peers," for example, singing out in choir, or expressing to a group one's innermost feelings. In group sessions, residents were repeatedly observed trying to help others resolve personal difficulties, or expressing deep concern for a resident's welfare especially in the case of those who want to leave the program. In the latter case, a "split group" is convened. Group members try to change the decision by explaining the potential "splitters" need for treatment and their concern for the potential damaging effects "splitting" may have. An inherent part of all group meetings is praise for positive behavior change and for movement from a lower status to

a new higher status. When a new level is achieved, there are cheers from the entire community. The cheers are an important rite of passage confirming and legitimizing the new status (Cf. Van Gennep, 1960).

The organization of the treatment group also gives residents close contact with the ex-addict and professional staff and upper level residents. This structure allows for daily interaction with these role models. The upper level residents and staff, through encouragement and verbal praise and personal attachments, guide the residents through the program. One resident described his relationship with the ex-addict staff member who helped him through the program as follows: "In my 'probe' (the initiation into Odyssey House) he told me he loved me. He's a real father figure."

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Mechanisms such as denial, avoidance, rationalization, rejection of others, devaluation of circumstances, or selectivity of circumstances, are often thought of as maladaptive. But they are also essential for maintaining or increasing positive self feelings, or decreasing negative self feelings, in potentially self devaluating circumstances. "The selection of a particular mechanism and its successful employment in the service of self-esteem, appears to be a function of such factors as early childhood environment, the range of options available to the subject, the degree to which the situation is unstructured or ambiguous, and the availability of social support" (Kaplan, 1972:595). The Odyssey House program focuses on all but the first of these factors.

The treatment group provides each resident with a structured situation and social support for the adoption of appropriate defense mechanisms. An example of such a defense mechanism is psychiatric interpretation of behavior or attitudes. The psychiatric interpretation provides a rationalization for past behavior and devaluates the circumstances of that behavior. This is illustrated by a resident who was discharged for stealing money and later readmitted. Readmission requires starting over with a new treatment group. This particular resident was observed during his second "Group-In." The group leader suggested that the resident's subconscious reason for stealing the money was to return home to reaffirm a relationship with his father. He further suggested that the boy's father probably preferred that his son be discharged rather than split or runaway from the program. This interpretation enabled the boy to avoid the label of a thief. Instead he was provided with a defense mechanism in the form of a subconscious motivation, that of seeing his father. More generally, it provides residents with a new ideology and a vocabulary which they can apply to explain their own behavior. It allows them to avoid negative self feelings in instances that could otherwise damage self-esteem.

This process can be seen by contrasting level I residents to higher level residents. During a Group-In NEW RESIDENTS describe their criminal behavior in a braggadocio manner. Autobiographies are "crime rap sheets" with phrases such as "I was ratted out and busted for B&E" (I was betrayed to the police and arrested for breaking and entering). They tend to avoid damage to self-esteem by viewing their criminal or drug related behavior as a badge of courage. It is a symbol of toughness, a demonstration of an

"acceptance of a set of standards which the individual feels capable of approximating, thus earning the approval of those who share those standards" (Kaplan, 1972:596). By contrast, ADVANCED RESIDENTS tend to explain their deviant behavior in terms of relationships and events that caused that deviant or violent behavior rather than a listing of the acts themselves. They avoid damage to self-esteem by describing their past life circumstances and their past behavior in relatively sophisticated psychiatric terminology. In addition they gain self-esteem by holding up present functioning and comparing it to past functioning to illustrate how far they have come while in the Odyssey House program.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS: "A SUBSTITUTE FOR HITTING"

Up to this point we have discussed cultural norms and sanctions, role models, and building self-esteem as methods by which Odyssey House resocializes. However, the resocialization is more effective for some types of deviant behavior than others. It has been stated earlier that of the five cardinal rules, violence had a significantly lower number of discharges for violation. Why doesn't the program work equally well for the other four cardinal rules?

We suggest that what differentiates the control of overt violence from the control of other prohibited acts (sex, drugs, theft), is that violence is the only one of these behaviors for which an alternative is provided. Sex is not allowed, nor are drugs. Cigarettes, money, and other possessions are rationed until one reaches the "group-in" phase. Until then, if one uses up his ration, it is a matter of doing without. Hence, for many residents, established behavior patterns must be inhibited or controlled and no alternatives are available.

Violence must also be controlled. But if one has a grievance, or becomes upset or angry, the program does provide an alternative to violence: the structured "encounter group." It provides a means of righting wrongs without violence. It is also a means of learning and practicing a new non-violent role. As one resident said, the encounter group "is a substitute for hitting."

THE ENCOUNTER GROUP PROCESS

From the time residents enter Odyssey House, if upset, they are urged and encouraged to write "slips" and to "take advantage of your group" (i.e., to use the group to settle problems). These are 2 by 4 inch pieces of paper on which one writes his or her name and date and the name of the person in the facility who has made the slip writer "have feelings" (become upset or angry). We will designate the slip writer as the sender and the person with whom the encounter is to be held the receiver. On the back of the paper the reason the sender is upset is listed. The slip is then handed to the treatment group leader or assistant. The assistant or group leader asks the sender if the encounter is immediate or if it can wait until more slips accumulate. Immediate encounters are called when residents feel they will strike the receiver if the encounter is delayed.

The group leader designates when and where the encounter group will

take place. Once the group has assembled, the leader calls out the sender's name and the name of the receiver. The sender faces the receiver (in some instances changing seats if necessary) and explains what behavior or attitude on the part of the receiver was upsetting and the feelings the receiver's behavior or attitude has generated.

If very upset, the sender is allowed verbal aggression (yelling or swearing at the receiver) in order to get issues out into the open. While the sender is presenting, the group and receiver must remain silent. If the receiver interrupts the sender, the group will chastize the receiver by telling him to "dig himself" (be quiet). When the sender is done, he or she will state "and that's my encounter" or "that's my slip." At this point, the receiver must indicate whether the encounter is or is not valid (true). If the encounter is valid, the receiver must help the sender resolve his or her feelings. Resolution of feelings can involve a simple apology and/or a plan of action that will correct such transgressions in the future. Receivers are not allowed to respond with verbal aggression. They must be concerned with helping the sender resolve feelings. The function of the group is to pressure the receiver into answering the encounter in the proper fashion and help resolve the problem which produced the sender's feelings.

THE STRUCTURED ENCOUNTER AND SOCIAL LEARNING

Rotter's (1954:340) social learning framework for changing behavior is primarily concerned with lowering the expectancy that maladaptive (in this case violent behavior) will lead to gratification. It is intended to increase the expectancy that alternative or new (non-violent) behavior will provide greater gratification in the same situation. The operation of the Odyssey House encounter groups can be viewed as an example of this social learning process. It changes violent behavioral expectancies by three processes:

(1) It places the patient in a situation where both the therapist (group leader) and others may directly reward adjustive (non-violent) behavior on the part of the resident. Residents are lavishly rewarded (i.e. praised) when they attempt their first encounters, when they carry out an encounter in a proper fashion (either sending or receiving), and when an encounter is carried out with seriousness and concern for the other person involved in the encounter.

(2) The encounter group allows residents to enter a social situation where they may observe non-violent behavior and its consequences. Since a major part of the structured encounter involves resolution of the sender's feelings by the actual transgressor, the resolution of feelings reinforces the sender for avoiding violence by presenting issues and expressing feelings.

(3) The encounter group provides the opportunity to deal with the root causes of the problem which led to the encounter. This demonstrates that there are non-violent ways of resolving conflicts and "getting justice." Continued practice, followed by social rewards from the group for successful resolution of problems, reinforces non-violent behavior and strengthens inhibitions to violent behavior patterns.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS AND "CATHARSIS"

There is one further aspect of the encounter groups which needs to be clarified because it brings out an issue of great theoretical and practical importance. The aspect we are refering to concerns the presumed cathartic value of the encounter group process.

Most of what we have reported up to this point is consistent with the theoretical rationale held by Odyssey House to explain its success in controlling violence. But discussions with both staff and residents revealed a large discrepancy between the Odyssey House view and our view of the contribution of the encounter groups. The prevailing view in Odyssey House is that the encounter groups owe their success to their presumed "cathartic" effect, i.e. to the fact that these groups let residents "blow off steam" and "get rid of their aggression." This is directly contrary to the research evidence (Bandura, 1973; Hokanson, 1970; Straus, 1974). In fact, research on this issue suggest that the use of some supposedly "cathartic" techniques may increase rather than decrease the probability that physical violence will occur.

Two things must be considered to understand this seeming contradiction. (1) It is essential to distinguish between different aspects of what is called "catharsis." One aspect is the idea of giving free rein to presumed aggressive needs. The other aspect is the idea of "getting issues out on the table" and not hiding one's anger. (2) In respect to Odyssey House, we must identify which of these two aspects is the focus of Odyssey House encounter groups.

Some encounter groups encourage participants to deal with anger by engaging in verbal aggression, i.e., behavior that is intended to hurt another, such as insulting. This type of encounter group is considerably different from what we have called the "structured" encounter groups in Odyssey House. Encounter groups at Odyssey House are structured to provide an alternative to BOTH verbal and physical aggression. Verbal aggression, within limits, is allowed only for the sender, and as a means of getting the issue out for discussion. The receiver cannot respond at any time in a verbally aggressive manner. Without such a restriction, the encounter is likely to lead to heightened rather than reduced aggression, and likely to produce retaliatory aggression rather than resolution of conflict (Straus, 1974:26). With the receiver prohibited from responding aggressively and only allowed to deal with the issues raised, the conflict can be dealt with without escalating to verbal or physical violence. The others present during an Odyssey House encounter maintain the structure of the encounter and see to it that the sender and receiver stay within their proper roles. They also help provide the sender with insights into feelings, help resolve the sender's feelings, reward the receiver for proper performance of his or her non-aggressive role, and in general provide a supportive atmosphere.

Thus, Odyssey House encounter groups differ from many other encounter groups in that (1) the resolution of conflicts between individuals is based on rules and goals limiting the use of verbal aggression and promoting the use of reasoning and (2) in having a specific social organization to maximize this process. Even though the Odyssey House staff tends to conceive of the groups in terms of cathartic release

of aggressive instincts or drives, our observation of what actually goes on in these sessions is almost the opposite. To the extent that the encounter groups contribute to Odyssey House's success in dealing with violence, it does not lie in "releasing pent up aggression." Instead, the Odyssey House encounter groups are, in effect, mechanisms for restricting rather than releasing aggression, and for requiring and teaching the use of self-control and reasoning as the primary means of dealing with anger and conflict.

CHANGE IN PROPENSITIES TOWAPD VIOLENCE

Six months of field observation of the Odyssey House program and its residents indicates that, at least within the facility, overt violence is well controlled. The preceeding sections have suggested that this results from (1) strong and unambiguous norms and sanctions opposing violence, (2) opportunity to acquire self-esteem by pro-social behavior, (3) non-violent role models, (4) a procedure which enables wrongs to be righted and conflicts to be resolved, and (5) which at the same time provides for internalization of non-violent behavior and extinguishing of violent behavior through a social learning process. However, it is not evident from these data whether internalization of non-violent behavior actually occurs. Are individual propensities to violence changed as a result of the operation of these violence decreasing mechanisms, or does Odyssey House just happen to do an effective job of repressing and/or redirecting violent response tendencies? If propensities toward violence are merely repressed, then once outside the confines of Odyssey House, violent behavior is likely to reappear. It is therefore important to know if Odyssey House changes individual propensities toward violence.

THE HAND TEST

To measure propensity toward violence, the Hand Test (Bricklin, Piotroski, and Wagner, 1962) was administered. The Hand Test is:

> "a diagnostic technique consisting of ten cards approximately three by five inches in size, which utilizes pictures of hands as a projective medium. On each card, except the last, a different picture of a hand is portrayed. The tenth card is blank. The cards are presented one at a time and the subject must "project" by telling what the hands are doing. For the last (tenth) card the subject must imagine a hand and tell what it is doing. Responses are recorded verbatim along with initial reponse times per card and other significant data" (Wagner, 1971:1).

The Hand Test is fairly successful in differentiating aggressive from non aggressive schizophrenics (Wagner and Hedvefdeff, 1963), assaultive from non assaultive delinquents (Wagner and Hawkins, 1964), disciplinary offenders from model prisoners, and adult offenders who committed crimes against people versus offenders who committed crimes against property (Brodsky and Brodsky, 1967). There are technical problems with these validity studies (Shaw et.al., 1964), similar to the deficiencies of validity studies of other projective techniques including the Rorschach and the TAT. However, the Hand Test is may be the best available (even if not perfect) instrument to measure propensity to violence.

The test provides many scores. For purposes of this paper the "Acting Out Ratio" (AOR) and the "Pathology Score" (PATH) will be used. The acting out ratio is designed to "predict acting out behavior which is

defined as a subject's behaving in such a way as to bring him to the attention of others (police, courts, school authorities, guidance clinics, psychiatrists, etc.) as a result of overt aggressive behavior" (Wagner, 1971:26).[4]

(Figure 1 about here)

The top half of figure 1 lets us compare the Odyssey adolescent PATH scores with normal high school students. It shows that at Time 1 Odyssey adolescents had a PATH score of 3.32, which is considerably higher than the 2.0 of normal high school students. Such a PATH score indicates a repression of violent tendencies (Wagner, 1971).

The acting out ratio (AOR) in the lower half of Figure 1 also indicates that at Time 1 Odyssey residents had a greater predisposition to violence than adolescents (.65, compared to .80 for normal high school adolescents), and about the same as the norm for delinquents (.68). Therefore, Odyssey House adolescents at Time 1 are closer to the delinquents than the normal high school students. In sum, the Odyssey adolescent population shows a greater propensity toward violence at Time 1 than normal high school students. The most important results, however, are the trend lines from Time 1 to Time 2. These show that, even after only twelve weeks, Odyssey House adolescent scores had converged to almost the normal adolescent mean on the AOR and had moved strongly in the normal direction on PATH.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Odyssey House seeks to resocialize many aspects of belief and behavior. This study focused on the extent to which the Odyssey program for adolescents was successful in eliminating violent behavior in the facility studied, and in changing propensities toward future violence among the residents. Given the violent background of many residents, and the crowding and stress associated with being an Odyssey House resident, the program has been remarkably successful. The paper summarizes the results of six months of field observation and psychological testing designed to document the process by which this is accomplished.

THE ODYSSEY TO NON-VIOLENCE

The findings show that the pragmatic and eclectic approach developed by Densen-Gerber (1973) has resulted in creating a therapeutic milieu which deals with several of the root causes of violence, including such things as the lack of clear normative standards concerning violence, low self-esteem, lack of non-violent role models to emulate, and lack of skill in interpersonal problem solving. Thus, Odyssey House attacks the problem of violence from a number of directions, the most fundamental of which are clear norms prohibiting violence and a social structure that provides rewarding alternatives to violence. The specific techniques include (1) the cardinal rule against violence, (2) role model of a staff who themselves have overcome violence, (3) an opportunity structure which allows residents to gain self-esteem by non-violent accomplishments, and (4) a system of encounter groups which provides a mechanism for the use of

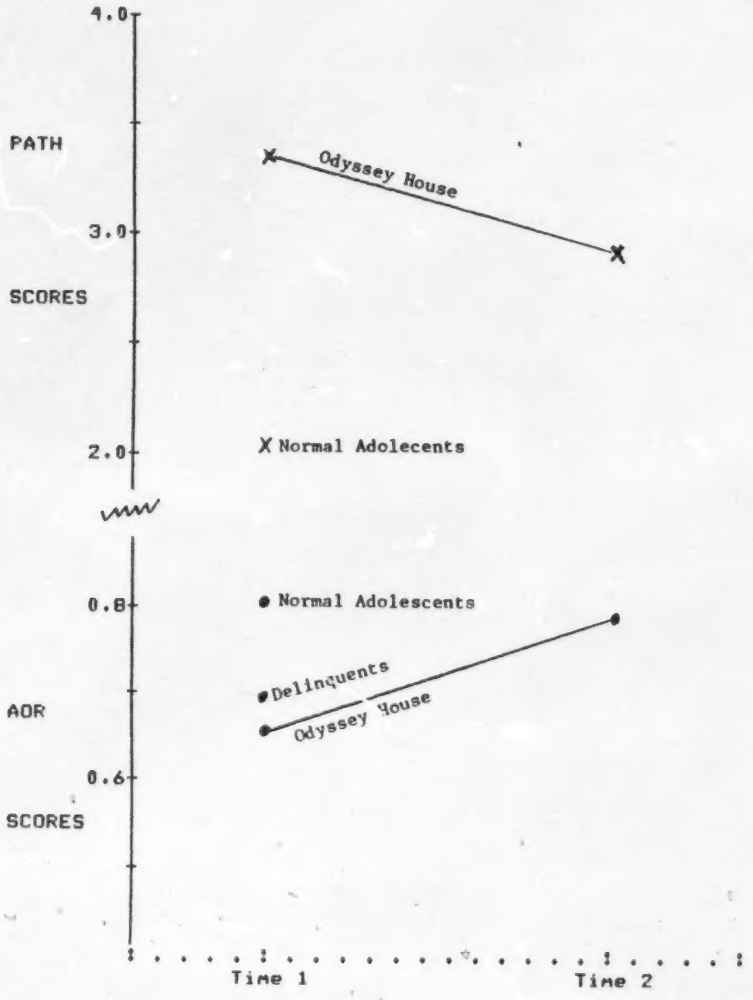

Figure 1. Hand Test Scores of Odyssey House Residents And Normative Comparison Groups.

reasoning and self control to resolve conflicts and for teaching non-violent methods of dealing with anger and conflict.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FAMILY

These techniques may also apply to a number of other settings, for example within families, and to violence between spouses in particular. Probably two thirds of all American couples have had at least one violent incident in the course of their marriage (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980:36). Conflict is an inevitable part of group life (Coser, 1967) and is particularly common in marriage (Hotaling and Straus, 1980). While the figures just cited may make it seem as though violence in marriage is almost inevitable, the Odyssey House experience shows us that the use of physical force is not inevitable, even under conditions which are at least as stressful as in families. We will therefore conclude by identifying the implications for the family of the four principles which this research suggests account for the non-violence of Odyssey House.

(1) The rule in every civilian institution of American society is that members may not hit each other. In the family, the opposite rule is explicit for parent-child relations and implicit for husband-wife relationships. Evidence presented in another paper shows that the marriage license is an implicit hitting license (Straus, 1980). It is almost gratuitous, but still necessary, to indicate that the starting point is for couples to explicitly adopt the same rule as prevails elsewhere. However, for this to be realistic, it is as fundamental for couples as for Odyssey House to be able to terminate anyone violating the cardinal rule against violence. That, in turn, requires that wives have the economic and social support necessary to leave a violent marriage. By contrast, in contemporary American society, where even women who are employed full-time earn only 59% of male full-time workers, millions of women continue to tolerate physical attacks because they are economically dependent on their husbands (Gelles, 1976; Straus, 1976). High on the agenda, therefore, are "safe houses" or "shelters" which provide an immediate alternative; and sexual equality which is essential for a long term reduction in marital violence.

(2) In respect to role models of non-violence, much marital violence is an adult version of "Johnny I've told you ten times." The link between parents use of violence and later violence towards spouses by their children is clear from a study of a nationally representative sample of American couples (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). This study found that the rate of marital violence rises in direct proportion to the amount of physical punishment experienced by the husbands and wives when they were children (see also Owens and Straus, 1975). The implication of the national violence survey and the research reported in this paper is for parents to take a leaf from the Odyssey House book, where staff as well as the residents find ways of coping with problems that are even greater than those of the typical family, without resorting to physical force. In short, reducing the level of marital violence will require reducing or eliminating the almost universal use of the physical punishment which provides a powerful role model in the use of violence to resolve family problems.

(3) In respect to self-esteem, observational studies of couples show that, despite the expectation that family members will be sources of recognition, suppport, and self-esteem, family interaction is actually characterized by much more negative and non-supportive interactions than positive feedback (Rauch,1974; Gottman, 1979). There are probably many spouses and many parents who, like members of street gangs, rely heavily on violence as their main source of intra-family power and recognition. Family members can take another leaf from the Odyssey House book and learn to be more rewarding and supportive of each other. Programs such as "Marriage Encounter" are, in fact, designed to help couples learn to do just this.

(4) The Odyssey system of structured encounter groups has profound implications for marital violence. One of the major reasons why violence is so common between spouses is that often, no other mechanism is perceived as available to resolve the conflict or secure justice. Our interviews with husbands and wives repeatedly produce instances such as the the wife who had pleaded, yelled, sulked, etc. Yet her husband kept having extra-marital affairs. One morning she "finally reached the end of my rope" and threw a coffee pot at him. He in turn had a long list of grievances about his wife (and had also hit her on several occasions). Couples like this need something equivalent to the "slips" and the structured encounter groups which enable grievances to be resolved in Odyssey House. In a mobile modern society it is difficult to convene a family encouter group to resolve such problems, as happened in traditional Hawaiian society (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, 1972:226). But we are developing equivalent institutions. This is part of what effective marriage counseling does, i.e. it deals not only with the immediate problem in the relationship, but also teaches methods of rational problem solution, especially when techniques such as the "Family Contract Game" (Blechman et al, 1976) are used.

In conclusion, important as is the current effort to change the age-old norms which implicitly condone violence within the family, prohibition by itself, even if coupled with moral outrage, is not likely to be any more effective than was the prohibition attempt of the 1920's. It is a necessary, but not sufficient, starting point. Much of what else is needed has been suggested by the factors which seem to account for the non-violence of Odyssey House. None will be easily accomplished, but at least the direction has been indicated.

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FOOTNOTES

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1. For the purpose of this paper, "aggression" is defined as an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of injuring another person. The injury can take many forms, for example, economic, psychological, or physical. The latter are usually termed "verbal aggression" and "physical aggression."

The term "violence," as used in this paper is synonymous with physical aggression: an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person. The pain or injury can range from slight, as in a slap, to murder. Although this is the basic definition of violence used in the Family Violence Research Program, it is often necessary to also take into account other characteristics of the violent act and the motivations of the actors. See Gelles and Straus (1979) for a detailed explanation of these and related concepts such as aggressiveness, hostility, conflict.

2. The New Hampshire facility described in this paper is the primary juvenile treatment center in the Odyssey system. The adolescent program is derived from the program operating in the adult facilities. Therefore, there are many similarities between the two programs. The essential differences are (1) the length of time necessary to complete the program, 18 months for the adult and 3 months for the adolescent, (2) a focus on individual movement through the various stages of the adult program and group movement in the adolescent program, and (3) a more intense therapy and rigid program structure in the adult program as compared to the adolescent program.

3. Resident staff are higher level adult residents. A part of their treatement program is to help adolescent residents advance in the Odyssey program. Ex-addict staff are graduates of the Odyssey program who are employed as staff members. Their functions include administering various aspects of the Odyssey House facility.

4. The AOR is computed by summing the number of responses categorized as affection, communication and dependency (the socially cooperative categories) and comparing them to the sum of the direction and aggression categories. The PATH score is computed by summing the number of withdrawal response, plus two times the number of bizarre responses.